

Creative Expressions Are Not Just Extras

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Theater as an extracurricular activity has always been a part of many teens' lives. It is a form of self-expression and a way to be social. Lynne Simari, a teen in the 50s, spoke about participating in drama at her high school, Dominican in Chicago. "I wasn't one of the smartest kids...! never played competitive sports, so [performance] was where I fit in. Singing, doing drama, speech, dancing." As the decades progressed, theater became more than an extracurricular; it became a future profession. Contemporary students at the suburban Maine South in Park Ridge often plan on majoring in drama in order to pursue a career or teach.

Writing for pleasure has existed in the form of a diary for many teens early in the century. Journaling is still a common practice, but recent years have seen a new phenomenon-teen spoken-word artists. Young Chicago Authors, developed in the early 90s to expose young people to creative writing, has encouraged teens to write and share their work. Spoken word combines poetry and performance in a unique blend that serves to make a statement or spread a message. Chicago's Green Mill was the birth place of poetry slams in the 80s and Chicago has continued to be a key player in the is creative movement.

Today, Chicago has a diverse selection of teenage programs that stimulate creativity, such as Gallery 37, Street Level Youth Media, the Old Town School of Folk Music, and the Young Chicago Authors. These programs will continue to encourage self-expression among teens.